

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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TAGS: PINS, PINT, IT

SUBJECT: LARGE-SCALE HOUSING EVICTIONS SET OFF ROME'S WORST CIVIL
VIOLENCE IN YEARS

1. VIOLENT CLASHES BETWEEN POLICE, RESIDENTS OF A WORKING CLASS
QUARTER IN ROME, AND EXTRAPARLIAMENTARY GROUPS OF THE LEFT BROKE
OUT SEPTEMBER 6-8 AS POLICE CARRIED OUT AN ORDER TO EVICT 150
FAMILIES OF SQUATTERS FROM ILLEGALLY OCCUPIED PUBLIC HOUSING.
THE WORST VIOLENCE WAS INSTIGATED BY THE EXTRAPARLIAMENTARY
GROUPS OF THE LEFT WHO ESPOUSED THE CAUSE OF THE DISPOSSESSED.
THE EVENTS HIGHLIGHTED ITALY'S ACUTE HOUSING SHORTAGE FOR LOW-
INCOME URBAN WORKERS, A MAJOR POLITICAL ISSUE IN ROME, AND THE
AGGRESSIVENESS AND ORGANIZATION OF THE EXTRAPARLIAMENTARY LEFT.

2. THE AUTHORITIES IN ROME WERE CONFRONTED WITH THE WORST
INSTANCE OF CIVIL VIOLENCE IN YEARS. THREE DAYS OF ENCOUNTERS
BETWEEN THE POLICE AND LABORING CLASS RESIDENTS OF THE
SAN BASILIO QUARTER RESULTED AS THE LATTER WERE BEING FORCIBLY
EVICTED FROM ILLEGALLY OCCUPIED NEW PUBLIC HOUSING. THE ACTION
CULMINATED SEPTEMBER 9 IN THE FATAL SHOOTING OF A YOUNG MAN,
IDENTIFIED VARIOUSLY AS A MEMBER OF EXTREME EXTRAPARLIAMENTARY
LEFTIST GROUPS. FOUR POLICE MEN WERE WONDED BY GUNFIRE, TWO
SERIOUSLY, AND MANY ON BOTH SIDES INJURED. THE MOST SERIOUS
VIOLENCE APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN INSTIGATED AND CARRIED OUT BY

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MEMBERS OF LEFTIST EXTREMIST GROUPS: LOTTA CONTINUA,

MANIFESTO AND AVANGUARDIA OPERAIA.

3. THE HOUSING IN QUESTION IS PUBLIC HOUSING AND THE FAMILIES IN COMPETITION FOR IT ARE ALL MEMBERS OF THE SAME SOCIAL GROUP. ABOUT 150 APARTMENTS HAD BEEN ILLEGALLY OCCUPIED BY THE SQUATTERS LAST FALL, AND THOSE ENTITLED TO THEM UNDER PUBLIC HOUSING PRIORITY LISTINGS HAD BROUGHT SUIT.

4. THE SITUATION IN SAN BASILIO HAD BEEN QUIET SINCE THE NIGHT OF SEPTEMBER 8 BUT REMAINS TENS, WITH POLICE STILL ON THE SCENE. INVESTIGATIONS HAVE BEGUN, TO FIX RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE VIOLENCE AND THE DEATH OF THE YOUNG EXTREMIST. HOWEVER, EVEN IF THE SITUATION WHERE THE VIOLENCE OCCURRED IS RESOLVED, THE ACUTE HOUSING SHORTAGE FOR LOW-INCOME FAMILIES WILL REMAIN, AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE A MAJOR POLITICAL ISSUE.

5. COMMENT: THE WILLINGNESS SHOWN BY EXTRAPARLIAMENTARY GROUPS OF THE LEFT TO RESORT TO DELIBERATE AND CAREFULLY PLANNED VIOLENCE, THEIR APPARENT SUCCESS IN ENLISTING ADHERENTS AMONG LOW-INCOME URBAN WORKERS ON WHOM THEY HAVE CONCENTRATED THEIR GRASSROOTS EFFORTS, AND THEIR PROGRESSIVE COORDINATION OF ACTION SUGGEST THAT THEY HAVE A POTENTIAL TO BECOME A SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL FORCE TO THE LEFT OF THE PCI. LACKING UNITY IN ORGANIZATION AND LEADERSHIP, HOWEVER, THEY CANNOT AS YET OFFER A PRACTICAL ALTERNATIVE TO HOSE WITHIN THE PCI WHO DISAGREE WITH THE COMPROMESSO STORICO AND THE CAUTION CURRENTLY SHOWN BY THE PCI LEADERSHIP. VOLPE

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